



PRESS RELEASE

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Ocean Institute granted \$1 million by the Sahm Family Foundation to establish a shark education center

Dana Point, CA: A leader in hands-on education in Orange County for more than forty years, Ocean Institute will introduce shark education to its inventory of popular school and public programs in order to enrich the lives of more children as a result of a \$1 million grant from the Sahm Family Foundation. This grant will make it possible for Ocean Institute to renovate an existing waterfront building to feature a Horn shark touch tank, a shark nursery, and interactive exhibits and artifacts related to sharks. The new Sahm Marine Education Center will provide hands-on, engaging educational experiences for students, teachers, parents and the general public that connect to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) principles.

“We could not be more excited to welcome sharks to our vast collection of marine life used to teach thousands of children each year, and we are honored to earn this leadership gift from the Sahm Family Foundation,” said Michael Torcaso, Ocean Institute’s board chairman. “This is a significant investment into our waterfront campus both in terms of improving the utilization of our facilities and expanding our educational capacity,” said Dan Pingaro, chief executive officer of Ocean Institute. “Most importantly, we will enrich the educational experience for thousands of children each year because of this grant.”

The Sahm Family Foundation has made strategic grants into Ocean Institute in the past, and family members have participated firsthand in its programs. Planning is underway to open this new education facility in early 2020 if not sooner. “Our board of directors were motivated to make this grant to Ocean Institute because we know what is being taught on their campus every day, year after year. There is no question that Ocean Institute enriches the lives of thousands of children, and that was the single most important factor in awarding this grant,” stated Chris Sahm, president of the Sahm Family Foundation.

Horn sharks are native to California coastal waters and solitary predators feeding on hard-shelled mollusks, echinoderms, crustaceans and small fish. Horn sharks are harmless to humans. “We are excited to connect students with hands-on interactions with these fascinating creatures. Horn sharks are able to survive and breed in captivity, which provides us with an ideal opportunity to showcase their lifecycles, behaviors, and important role in our local ecosystem. Increased shark sightings in Southern California waters has stimulated curiosity and fear of these local predators. Providing public access to an innocuous member of the shark family is a safe and engaging way to educate students about all sharks,” stated Dr. Wendy Marshall, vice president of education for Ocean Institute.

About Ocean Institute

Ocean Institute is a highly respected ocean science, maritime history and experiential education nonprofit located in Dana Point Harbor. This modern waterfront campus is adjacent to a federally-protected Marine Life Conservation Area, and encompasses 33,000 square feet of hands-on exhibits, science labs and a live collection of 1,100 specimens of local marine life within 92 aquariums. Central to its unique identity throughout California and essential to its experiential mission, Ocean Institute operates two impressive tall ships. *Spirit of Dana Point* is a 118-foot schooner built in 1970, and *Pilgrim* is a 130-foot square rigged brig built in 1945 in Denmark. *Pilgrim* is a replica of the ship made famous by Richard Henry Dana Jr. in his epic memoir “Two Years Before the Mast”, that chronicled his 1830’s journey along the California coast. Ocean Institute also operates the 70-foot research vessel R/V *Sea Explorer*. Over forty years, Ocean Institute has

impacted the lives of two million California students with this mission statement: “using the ocean as our classroom, we inspire children to learn.” Ocean Institute has mastered a continuum of structured academic programs for students from elementary through high school, and inspires over 100,000 students and the general public each year to explore and learn with a hands-on approach to ocean-related science, research and conservation. Ocean Institute’s diverse program inventory has a high concentration of STEM core content that aligns with California education standards. To learn more or become a member please visit www.oceaninstitute.org.

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